

September 10, 2017

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH IN BREVARD COUNTY ISSUES FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: CARBON MONOXIDE



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What is Carbon Monoxide?

Carbon monoxide (CO) is an invisible, odorless, colorless, and tasteless gas that is highly poisonous by interfering with the delivery of oxygen in the blood to the rest of the body.

What are the major sources of CO?

Items that use coal, wood, charcoal, natural gas, propane, gasoline, diesel, kerosene, and heating oil for fuel, such as portable generators, small gasoline engines, charcoal grills, gas stoves, portable fuel-powered space heaters, automobile exhaust from attached garages, and even smoking tobacco produce CO. Problems can arise because of improper placement, installation, operation, and maintenance of CO generating devices or appliances.

What are the symptoms of CO poisoning?

Depending on the level of exposure, CO may cause fatigue, weakness, chest pain for those with heart disease, shortness of breath upon exertion, abdominal pain, vomiting, headaches, confusion, lack of coordination, impaired vision, loss of consciousness, and in severe cases, death.

What should you do if you think you have CO poisoning?

Don't ignore symptoms, especially if more than one person is feeling ill. Anyone who suspects symptoms of CO poisoning should go outside the home or building immediately and seek prompt medical attention.

If a person has collapsed or is not breathing, call 911 for emergency medical assistance immediately from a safer location such as outside or a neighbor's home. Call the Florida Poison Information Center at 1-800-222-1222 for additional information and advice about CO poisoning.

What can be done to prevent CO poisoning?

Ensure all household combustion appliances (fireplaces, stoves, water heaters, furnaces) are working properly, vented outside with no leaks, and installed per manufacturers' instructions and local building codes. Improperly designed or

malfunctioning exhaust systems may also contribute to elevated CO levels in homes. Opening doors and windows or using fans will not prevent CO build-up to life threatening levels. Portable generators and charcoal grills should never be operated inside homes or other enclosed or partially enclosed buildings or outside within 20 feet of doors, windows, and openings to the house.

Do not use ovens and gas ranges to heat your home. Do not leave a car or lawn mower engine running in a shed or garage, or in any enclosed or partially enclosed space. ALWAYS install battery-powered or plug-in CO alarm (with battery backup) in your home.

What about CO alarms?

The US Consumer Product Safety Commission recommends the installation of CO alarms in every home. Install battery-operated CO alarms or plug-in CO alarms with battery backup per manufacturer's installation instructions. The CO alarm should be certified to the requirements of the latest safety standards for CO alarms (UL 2034, IAS 6-96, CSA 6.19.01). In addition,

remember to test your CO alarms per the manufacturer recommendations and replace dead batteries.

REMEMBER: CO alarms can be used as a backup, and not as a replacement for proper use, placement, and maintenance of your fuel-burning device or appliances. Also, CO alarms are for immediate health issues. Lower level CO exposure below the alarm threshold can still contribute to adverse health effects in susceptible individuals (persons with heart or lung disease for example).

For more information, please contact the Florida Department of Health in Brevard County at www.brevardeh.com or visit www.floridahealth.gov or www.floridadisaster.org.